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Office of the Assistant to the Director

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Remarks

by

W. E. Colby

Director of Central Intelligence

before

Pacem in Terris IV

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to talk to you about what intelligence does for peace. The revelations of the past few weeks have probably led many of you to question what intelligence has to do with peace. Those revelations reflect things past, things that a new intelligence itself rooted out and corrected. We are now engaged in developing a new role for intelligence, one that reflects modern American precepts and values. We ask your cooperation and support in articulating this new role.

Dr. Schlesinger once said that one of the primary social services expected from government is security. This can be gained, in the old Biblical phrase, by "a strong man armed in his camp." I think we have developed other ways to achieve security over the centuries, particularly in the past 28 years during which American intelligence has matured and become the best in the world.

Intelligence now enables us to anticipate as well as to know. Anticipation allows us to arm ourselves, if such be necessary, with the right weapon. We need not face the light and accurate slingshot with an unwieldy broadsword. Anticipation also allows us to deter aggressors, demonstrating by our protective shield the futility of attacking us.

But anticipation these days also presents us with an opportunity, beyond anything known in the past, to negotiate. When we have knowledge of a foreign weapons system in the research phase, we can then discuss a mutual agreement to forgo its development and deployment. This can save millions of dollars on both sides -- which can then be spent on plowshares rather than on swords. Such, of course, was the result of our negotiations with the Soviet Union about anti-ballistic missile systems. Intelligence made a significant contribution to the negotiating process, but its ability to monitor actual compliance was crucial to concluding the agreement. Vast sums, estimated between 50 and 100 billion dollars, were saved because neither side had to build extensive ABM systems.

The anticipation made possible by good intelligence offers a greater contribution to peace than merely limiting weapons expenditures. Anticipating future disputes can permit their resolution while they are still only problems. Predicting crises and confrontations can permit conciliation and compromise before they occur. Suspicions and misunderstandings can be replaced by accurate perceptions that there are real problems on both sides. Men of good will can then work to resolve these problems through international conferences, through joint studies into the facts, or through recognition of mutual rights and interests.

I therefore believe it highly appropriate for intelligence to be invited to a discussion of how we obtain peace on earth. Intelligence has contributed to this end and will contribute even more in the future.

The problems of the future can result in conflict or cooperation. Consider:

-- overpopulation and underproduction;

-- nuclear proliferation;

-- extremism and terrorism;

-- the economic imbalances between rich and poor countries;

-- the exploitation of hitherto inaccessible riches in the sea or in space;

-- the interdependence of economies and even cultures;

-- the acceleration of events by exponential improvements in transportation and communication.

We must have systematic knowledge of these complex subjects, full awareness of all our capabilities to deal with them, and an understanding of the intentions of the actors on the scene. Intelligence provides these. It is a tool to help America move toward peace with our fellow partners on this globe.

There are those, however, who contend that our intelligence has in the past and can in the future create the very problems that limit our hopes for peace. To them I say that their concept

of intelligence is outmoded. When it looks at open societies, today's intelligence collects what is publicly available; uses technology to gather and process information that can be seen, heard, or sensed; and then carefully analyzes the bits and pieces of the jigsaw puzzles to provide an answer to the problems we face.

There are societies and political systems, however, that cling tenaciously to secrecy as a basis for power. Against these societies, which can threaten our peace, it is indeed necessary to employ the older techniques of secret intelligence developed for a world in which openness and free exchange were unobtainable. It is the very thought processes and procedures that create such secret plans that threaten our long-term hopes for peace among nations and peoples in the new open world we look toward.

We must avoid a repetition of our ingenuous belief in the 1920's that the world had been made safe for democracy and that gentlemen, in consequence, should not read other gentlemen's mail. If we can indeed achieve a world of gentlemen through the process of negotiation and resolution of the passions and ambitions of the past, then truly we can turn away also from the use of secret intelligence. But until that day, we hazard peace if we blind ourselves to realities, as the great democracies did during the 1930's.

The capability of intelligence quietly to influence foreign situations can -- and has -- contributed to peace. I do not contest that many of these operations in our history were more narrowly justified by their contribution to what was then seen as America's interest.

But in a number of instances, some quiet assistance to democratic and friendly elements enabled them to resist hostile and authoritarian groups in an internal competition over the future direction of their countries. Postwar Western Europe resisted Communist political subversion and Latin America rejected Cuban-stimulated insurgency. They thereby thwarted at the local level challenges that could have escalated to the international level.

That there can be debate as to the wisdom of any individual activity of this nature is agreed. That such a potential must be available for use in situations truly important to our country and the cause of peace is equally obvious.

Many of our citizens would express agreement with what I have said, but still express concern that there is an inherent contradiction between the need of intelligence for secrecy and our Constitutional structure of openness. They reject a hypocrisy that allows intelligence to operate while professing that it does not.

It is true that the old concept of intelligence did conflict with our ideal of openness. This contradiction was dealt with by a cautious averting of responsible supervision from what were viewed as the necessary unpleasantries of the world of intelligence. The Members of Congress who said they did not want to know of our activities, the careful circumlocutions used in the directives developed for intelligence -- these reflected a consensus that while intelligence was needed to protect America, America was unwilling to admit its use of intelligence.

As a result, intelligence made some mistakes and did some misdeeds. That these were truly few and far between over the years of its history is a credit to the patriotism and integrity of the men and women of intelligence, rather than to controls upon them. But that they did occur forced attention to the need to articulate the proper role of intelligence in America.

After Vietnam and Watergate, exposures of improper intelligence activities aroused concern and launched the current exhaustive investigations. Intelligence has cooperated with these reviews because we in intelligence believe the future of intelligence is important to our country. We also believe that intelligence must find its fully understood and accepted position in our constitutional structure.

We Americans recognize the need for secrets when our institutions cannot operate without them, witness our ballot box, our grand jury proceedings, and our protection of commercial secrets. Intelligence needs secrets or its agents are exposed; patriotic Americans contributing to their country are pilloried as fronts; and chinks in an adversary's armor are rapidly closed when we obligingly make them public.

We -- all of us -- must develop out of our current investigations a new concept of responsible American intelligence. It will be a further innovation that America can bring to the intelligence profession. We will do it in essentially three steps.

-- We will articulate better guidelines for intelligence, spelling out what it properly can do and what it will not do. We will ensure that it is focused on foreign intelligence, and does not infringe the rights of our citizens.

-- We will develop better supervision of intelligence by the Executive, by the Congress, and even, where necessary, by the Judiciary. Better external supervision of intelligence will certainly generate intensive internal supervision, ensuring that American intelligence complies with America's constitutional concepts.

-- And we will develop better secrecy for those aspects of intelligence that really need it, while at the same time ending the old tradition of total secrecy of everything about intelligence. The stream, even flood, of intelligence secrets that have been exposed this past year has brought home to every American the fact that we must have better protection for those secrets we need to keep.

The hostile groups exposing our intelligence personnel, the hasty headlining of important technical intelligence projects, or the arrogance of those revealing our country's proper and important secrets in the cause of a self-proclaimed "higher morality," all these have demonstrated the weakness of our current procedures for protecting our necessary secrets. We need no Official Secrets Act muzzling our press or frightening our citizens, and we in intelligence do not ask for one. We do need to be able to discipline those who freely assume the obligation of secrecy as members of our profession and then willfully repudiate it. We are sure that we can obtain the same recognition of our intelligence profession's need for confidentiality that we extend to our doctors, our lawyers, and our journalists.

Taking these three essential steps will not be easy. But I believe that we are now turning to a debate of the real issues that face American intelligence rather than agonizing

over the missteps of the past. It is my sincere hope that this debate will lead to the kind of changes that I have outlined for American intelligence. It is vitally important to America that our citizens regain their respect and trust in our intelligence service. There must be a national consensus that American intelligence serves America and honors the Constitution. There must be a consensus that American intelligence is properly guided, properly supervised, and capable of protecting its own secrets so it can protect America.

I believe that a strong and free America is essential if we are to move toward peace on earth. I believe that a truly American intelligence service is equally essential to keeping America strong, free, and in peace.